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STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NEA/PA, NEA/AIA, NEA/PI, INR/NESA, R/MR, I/GNEA,  
B/BXN, B/BRN, NEA/PPD, NEA/IPA FOR ALTERMAN  
LONDON FOR TSOU  
PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: KUWAIT MEDIA REACTION - ELECTIONS: REDISTRICTING,  
CORRUPTION, ALLIANCES

Block Quotes

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Wednesday, June 21, 2006

-- Under the headline "We Want It One" columnist Mr. Nabeel Al-Fadhel wrote in the conservative Arabic daily Al-Watan: "Local events make us believe more in the need to reduce the number of electoral districts. What we hear and see locally makes us even more determined to call for only one district. We want MPs that would represent the nation, not just their small districts. We are asking for one district to avoid going through a period of mistakes where we would discover that ten or five were wrong and then have to have another referendum to change from five to one. We need to take a leap into the future and be proactive... If young people are the ones who are leading the orange movement, as some people claim, then let us lower the qualifying age to vote and let all youth decide whom they want to represent them. It is also time to allow our brothers in the armed forces to vote. Who is more qualified to vote on national issues than those who put their lives at risk defending this country? Some people are asking for ten; others want it five; we say we want it one to represent one country."

-- In his daily column headlined "Slogan Merchants" Secretary General of Kuwait's Journalists Association Mr. Faisal Al-Qanai wrote in the pro-government Arabic daily Al-Seyassah: "The talk about the spread of vote buying and political financing harms not only the accused candidates, but it also ruins the image of the whole country; this is unacceptable. When we talk about vote buying then presumably there is a buyer and seller. If all the rumors are correct, then we have amongst us thousands of people who are selling their votes, and this is something that we can not accept. We are against this shameful act. However, we do not want to hear baseless accusations without any proof. Instead, we want to hear clear agendas and election programs. People do not want food fests after long speeches full of empty promises. The upcoming National Assembly must be ready and equipped to serve the needs of the nation, not become another arena to fight personal battles between MPs at the cost of national interests."

-- Saud Al-Samaka, a liberal academic and columnist in the daily moderate Al-Qabas, wrote an article under the headline "Let Us Say It Again: This Is an Extraordinary Election" where he commented on speeches at the election campaign of Mr. Ahmed Al-Sa'adoun. Mr. Al-Samaka said: "Mr. Nasser Al-Sanai began his speech by reassuring Mr. Al-Sa'adoun that the Islamic Constitutional Movement (Muslim Brotherhood - ICM) is standing behind him all the way. Mr. Al-Sanai was not speaking on behalf of all political Muslim groups in Kuwait."

He was only stating the position of his group. This I think is a good indication. Because when the ICM declares its support to reformists and people with good intentions, regardless of whether the movement's ideology agreed with these reformist or not, then this by itself is an achievement."

-- Conservative Arabic daily Al-Watan published an Op-Ed by Mr. Hassan Ali Karam carrying the headline "The Stupidity of Liberals" where he opined: "Perhaps the first and biggest mistake that liberals have committed today is their coalition with Islamists in the electoral district battle, and the fight against corruption and reform. The demands of Islamists have never included a fight against corruption. But they are now riding this wave with the liberals after realizing that corruption and reconstruction of the political system are the two most popular topics in this election. Since Islamists and especially the Muslim Brotherhood group are opportunists, they took advantage of the circumstances and adopted fighting corruption and electoral redistricting as their main goal. They even put on the orange shawl. Some people might excuse the liberals for their coalition with the Islamists, based on the premise that liberals feel a weakness in their public support in some districts that are predominately controlled by Islamists and where liberals stand no chance of gaining votes. This might be true, but the liberal's fatal mistake was handing over the keys for this election battle to the Islamists."

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